Nation
Volume 18, No. 11 • April 8, 2011

Gearing up for the Goose

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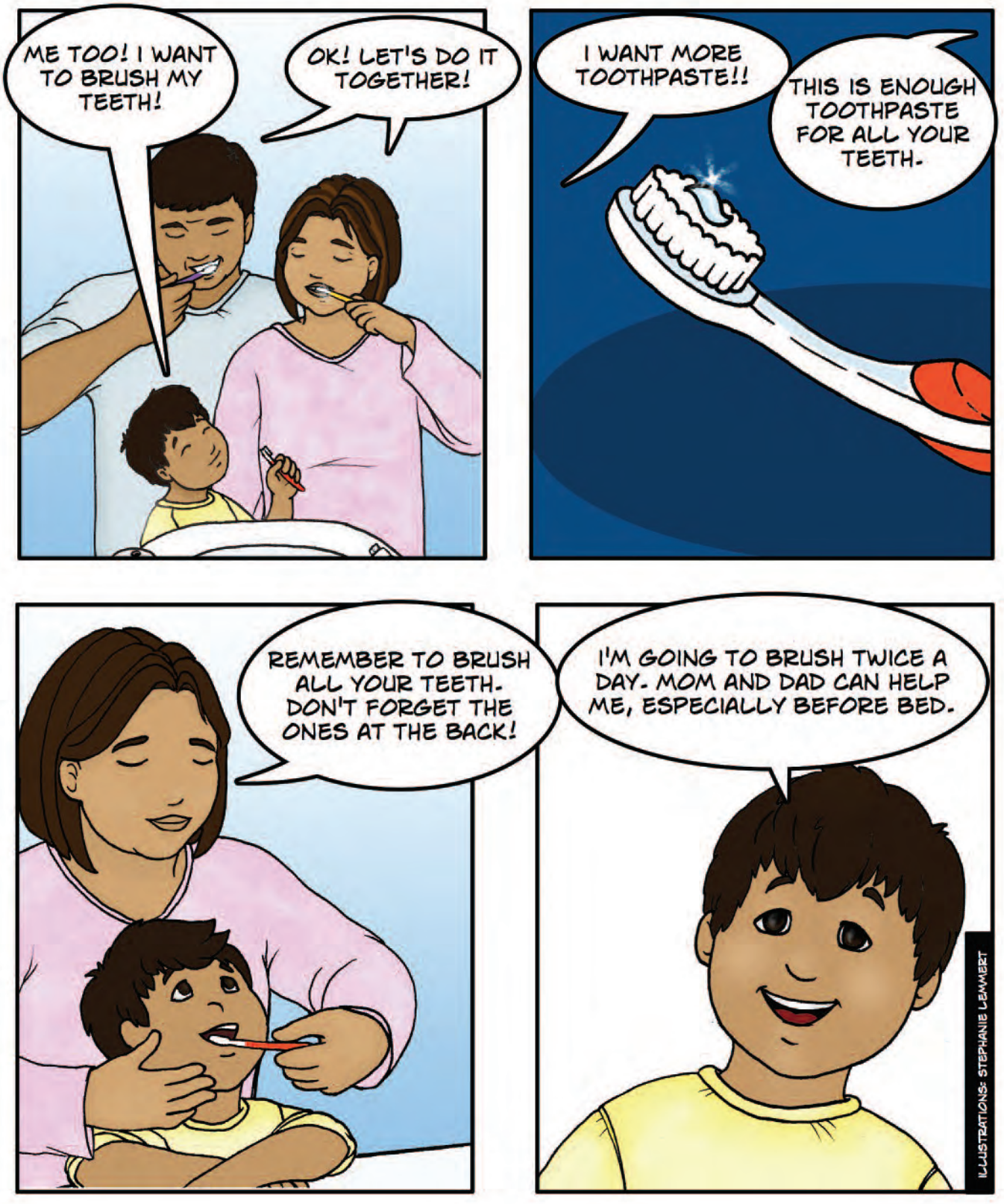
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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

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Election 2011

By Will Nicholls

We need a better reality show! Recently the minority government headed by Prime Minister Steven Harper announced an election for all Canadians because of the Unholy Trinity of the Opposition.

At least this is the message coming our way via the Conservative Party spin doctors. It is fear mongering at its best, reminiscent of the way the Republican Party made gay marriage the election issue of greatest importance to Americans a few years ago. One almost has to admire the Conservatives and their political acumen. They have learnt their lessons well since Mulroney was in power.

Still, one would hope the campaign would focus on some real issues of interest to First Nations voters.

For example, a friend of mine organized a demonstration in Ottawa a couple weeks ago for the over 500 missing and murdered women in this country. It was done under the Sister In Spirit banner. The Native Women's Association of Canada asked them to not use the name because it might affect their funding. It seems the Canadian government was not happy with Sisters In Spirit becoming a rallying cry and brand name. The $15 million promised for this issue saw $10 million go to the RCMP to deal with the murdered and missing women. With the continued inaction on this shocking lack of justice, one can see Canada's embarrassment slowly fading into the background.

Then there is the matter of safe schools. On the western side of James Bay, Attawapiskat finally has a guaranteed school after years of struggle. Many other communities are still left with inadequate facilities and funding for basic education needs.

The $10 billion that Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page says the Conservative "tough on crime" agenda will cost could go a long way to alleviating the social problems contribute to crime. A fraction of that figure would largely solve the housing problems of many First Nations communities, for instance. It is not only the health problems associated with overcrowding but the social stresses involved that help inflate the disproportionate numbers of First Nations people in Canadian prisons.

Harper is found wanting when it comes to First Nations issues. The cupboard was pretty bare in the budget his government tabled, days before the election call, when it came to Canada's Aboriginal population. His half-hearted apology to the residential school survivors, the nonbinding acceptance of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the killing of the Kelowna Accord leaves one wondering whether his words are more than meaningless rhetoric.

At times this election campaign feels more like an episode of *Jersey Shore*. The Harper administration was brought down as a result of lies and deception, becoming the first government ever to be convicted of Contempt of Parliament. They were hiding the true costs of important government initiatives, specifically the crime agenda and the new fighter jets for the Canadian military.

This isn't the first time the Conservatives attempted to hide money, remember. Four high-ranking Conservatives, including Senators Doug Finley and Irving Gerstein, were charged under the Elections Act with moving more than $1 million through local ridings to help fund the party's national campaign in 2008.

And this does not even touch upon the Freudian slip of the tongue when Harper confused election with erection during a speech in French. Do we really need to dwell on this embarrassing moment? After all there is so much more such as the fact Harper almost word for word repeated part of the speech of the evil emperor from *Star Wars*.

While we might not be thrilled or even mildly excited to vote, if you do not then you can't complain when NATO doesn't send in the jets to ensure your rights are respected, or if transparency in your government and democracy is no more than a buzzword. This is one reality show that, even if it is built on the same lies, posturing and bravado that we see on the tube, has real impacts on our lives.

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photo by:
Reggie Tomatuk

on the cover:
Maudie with a ptarmigan

rez notes

The outdoorsy type

By Sonny Orr

The flock of geese flew by, quietly checking out the James Bay sun-cured cedar driftwood and black-spruce decoys spread out over the shallow pond, the reflections of the clouds clearly outlined in the mirror-like waters. The head goose turned back after a single call from the hunter crouched and well-hidden in his blind. The ancient double-barrel 20-gauge pops out and quickly downs four geese. The other guns in the surrounding blinds pop out and shoot down their share, carefully leading the decimated flock into the more powerful 12-gauge loads, capable of knocking down geese as they try to climb out of reach. The final splat of the head goose on the edge of the far side of the pond indicates that the bounty must be picked up before another flock appears low over the trees. It will prove to be a good day. Still, the flocks seem to be fewer and fewer and the 1970s roll into the next millennium....

It's four in the morning and the hunters prepare themselves, picking up the cellphone to see if the next farmer has allowed them to hunt on their lands, ridding the farm of those pesky big birds. Conservation hunt, it's called, preserve the farm lands from foraging fowl. In today's world, the hunters have gone where no hunter has gone before it became a popular activity, hunting as a sport. But these hunters have quite the new technology to bag these critters.

At the latest trade shows for the outdoorsy types, everything under the sun is available, but, still, it just seems to take away from the time and pleasure of catching food on the fly. After brushing aside the stuffed moose and goose calling gadgets, the tons of brochures and giveaway samples, it becomes clear that the real hunter needs to be addressed as a client at these shows. I have come up with wish list of gadgets that I hope the outdoor industry will eventually supply to the seasoned hunter.

Starting at the bottom of the wish list, at number 10, an app for the 'pod that is programmed with all the different calls that every goose hunter should know. So when a loner flies by, the app would pipe just the right call into your ear bud, coaching you at the same time on all the various call and different circumstances. You can't shoot if you can't lure in your prey, can you?

Next, a Chihuahua-sized dog, incredibly strong and smart enough to understand at least 50 commands and able to swim endlessly, would be perfect. Think of it – you shoot and kill a goose which lands a 100 yard in chest-deep waters, you can reach into your pocket and throw your dog as close as you can to your kill and sit back until it returns. And when you get bored, you can always entertain yourself and talk to your dog.

Next, in no real order, binoculars that never fog up, break or go out of focus; a combination packsack seat/back rest that has a coffee dispenser on one side and a small pocket for the spoon; a combination seat trunk that clips onto your skidoo on all that wasted space at the back; airbags that inflate whenever it senses water above a certain level to hold up your snowmobile in case you're breaking through the ice; matches that always light; a teapot that self boils in a minute or two with a built-in filter; a self-brewing thermos you just add water and coffee grinds; and a self-cleaning shotgun with a spring-operated shot shell loaded with gun cleaner. And finally, at the top of the wish list – drum roll, please – socks that stay dry, no matter what, with hip-waders that stay dry and warm.

Until then, hunting is still perfect with the old-style wooden decoys, just you and your buddies' skills versus the wise goose.

the Nation is published every two weeks by Beesum Communications

EDITORIAL BOARD
L. Stewart, W. Nicholls, N. Diamond, E. Webb

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Will Nicholls

IYIYUU AYIMUUN EDITOR
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COPY EDITOR
Martin Siberok

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
S. Orr, A. German, X. Kataquapit,

PHOTOGRAPHY
A. German, N. Diamond, W. Nicholls, D. Valade

DIRECTOR OF FINANCES
Linda Ludwick

SALES REPRESENTATIVES
Danielle Valade, Ginette Grégoire

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Claire MacKinnon

THANKS TO: Air Creebec

WHERE TO REACH US:
POSTMASTER:
The Nation PRODUCTION OFFICE
4529 CLARK, #403
MONTREAL, QC., H2T 2T3
EDITORIAL & ADS
TEL.: 514-272-3077, FAX: 514-278-9914
The Nation HEAD OFFICE
P.O. BOX 151, CHISASIBI, QC. J0M 1E0
www.nationnews.ca
E-MAIL ADDRESSES:
Editorial: nation@beesum-communications.com
news@beesum-communications.com
Ads: for Danielle Valade
ads@beesum-communications.com
for Ginette Gregoire
publicity@beesum-communications.com
Classifieds: beesum@beesum-communications.com

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PRINTED BY IMPRIMERIE LEBONFON

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PUBLICATION MAIL #40015005
ISSN #1206-2642
The Nation IS A MEMBER OF:
THE JAMES BAY CREE COMMUNICATIONS SOCIETY,
CIRCLE OF ABORIGINAL CONTROLLED PUBLISHERS,
MAGAZINES CANADA
QUEBEC COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER ASSN.
CANADIAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS ASSN.
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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

And the winner is...

Cree rockers CerAmony pick up Juno award for Best Aboriginal Recording

By Martin Siberok

The past several weeks have been a rollercoaster ride for the CerAmony boys. Matthew Iserhoff and Pakesso Mukash returned to Montreal from a recent visit to Toronto with a shiny new possession in their hands – a Juno statue for Best Aboriginal Recording of the Year.

Relaxing at home after a celebratory weekend in Toronto, Iserhoff reflects on the experience he and Mukash had at the Canadian music awards, March 26-27. "I'm still wired," Iserhoff confesses. "We were taking everything in stride, but when it happens, it happens so fast. You get this sudden jolt – that's what it felt like when we got the Juno."

Iserhoff admits he found the awards ceremony an anxiety-inducing experience. "We were nervous wrecks and could hardly sit still. I was squirming in my seat waiting for the category to come up. Once our name was called, my heart just pumped like crazy – it felt like it was popping out my chest. What a shocker!"

When looking at the other nominees in the Aboriginal recording category, Iserhoff's surprise was justified, as the competition was quite stiff. "You had Derek Miller, Joey Stylez, Eagle & Hawk and Little Hawk. These guys have been there for years and have two or three albums in the bag. For us, just getting our debut album nominated was already an honour. And, of course, winning was even more of an honour. That solidified the idea that perhaps we are doing something right here."

Since picking up the Juno, Iserhoff says interest in CerAmony has soared. "I've been responding to calls and emails left and right for interviews in the last couple of days."

For the two members of CerAmony, their self-titled debut represents eight years of dreams and hard work. "The album is a combination of everything that we know and all the work we've put into this project. It's a mixed-tape of the last eight years."

The one thing that really stands out when listening to CerAmony's album is the variety of musical styles, ranging from First Son with its Eminem rap delivery to the quiet Shine Alive ballad that highlights Iserhoff's sweet-sounding voice. "All our musical influences are reflected here as well as certain messages we want to convey.

"First Son is about the challenge the Cree youth faced at the time of the Paix des Braves agreement in 2002 and about the power structure in the Cree territory. While Shine Alive conveys a sense of hope, a sense of peace. It's like talking to your son or daughter about waking up without the sound of bombs or the threat of war."

When it comes to CerAmony's central message, Iserhoff says it's pretty straightforward. "The idea behind the band is to understand each other regardless of where we come from, what our beliefs are, what our politics are, what creed or race we are. All religions have a ceremony and in the realm of the ceremony you find a sense of love and unity. We felt that this was universal as well as unique to what we do as Cree people with our spirituality and our traditions. It's creating an understanding about where we come from – and music is a great venue to convey this kind of message.

"Also, our message is about getting involved; about questioning and challenging things in the Cree world – the politics, the leadership. It's about creating a voice and speaking out on issues that we are facing. We need to assume that role and take on the responsibility."

Then Iserhoff quickly adds, "But it's not all politics, it's not all social commentary, CerAmony is about having fun too."

Another element that has contributed to CerAmony's success has been the incredible support that the band has received throughout Eeyou Istchee. "It's something we don't take for granted. People have seen us go from two guys doing acoustic sets to now a band with electric guitars, bass and drums. And they have always supported us and that support is never forgotten."

> "YOU GET THIS SUDDEN JOLT – THAT'S WHAT IT FELT LIKE WHEN WE GOT THE JUNO."

Besides the Juno win, another piece of big news is that CerAmony will travel to Germany in early April. "We will be performing in Berlin at a conference for the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. There we will be speaking out about uranium mining. As you know in Mistissini we are facing a similar challenge. Fortunately, the community stood strong against this mining project. So we're going to Berlin to raise the awareness of what is happening to us right now."

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Solidarity against racism

Val d'Or pulls off yet another successful anti-racism week with fun and learning for all

By Amy German

In its 11th edition, the city of Val-d'Or was once again host to five days of activities devoted to anti-racism awareness and learning.

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDFNC)'s vice president Janet Mark, who also works at the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue First Nations Pavilion, said the week was jam-packed with activities and that the VDFNC this year had tremendous participation from their partners within all of Val-d'Or's learning institutions.

"The institutions were much more involved than in previous years. The Friendship Centre organized some activities on the premises or held activities at the university and over at the high school they just went ahead and organized their own activities," said Mark.

The week was kicked off on Monday with the Friendship Centre hosting an open house for the general public. Those interested were able to visit the VDFNC and learn more about what happens there through a 45-minute guided tour. For those not normally privy to the Centre's activities, it was an eye-opening experience.

Later on that evening, the VDFNC held a launch for the new book about the Centre's history.

Written by Val-d'Or journalist François Bélisle, who has written on the VDFNC over the years, Kinawit (Algonquin for "us"), serves as a retrospective on the Centre's 35-year existence and features memoirs and photos of those involved during that time.

"A lot of people who came out for the launch had been involved with the Friendship Centre in the past and they shared their stories about their experience," said Mark

Though many of the activities went on for the full five days, including games and workshops at the local primary and secondary schools geared towards learning and sharing, Wednesday, March 23, brought out 100 folks for two unique experiences.

At the Cégep's First Nations Pavilion, folks from all walks of life gathered for a tasting of traditional Aboriginal foods and then a film screening.

The films were put on by Wapikoni Mobile, a youth-driven film project where young people are mentored during the process of making short films on racism and Aboriginal identity. The films were made by Aboriginal youth in the area and nearby communities, not only by Algonquins, but Crees and Innu. Val-d'Or's First Nations youth put together the screening and the films were watched by anyone whose interest was piqued.

The following day the Pavilion also hosted two other unique activities, first a special lunchtime conference hosted by Béatrice Vaugrante, director general of the francophone branch of Amnesty International Canada.

Vaugraante devoted the event to First Nations of Quebec and Amnesty's campaign to raise awareness about Violence against Aboriginal women. She also talked about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This was followed by a special panel presentation that was put on in a talk-show format; its set-up was similar to Radio-Canada's program, Tout le monde en parle.

A panel of five guests presenting different perspectives participated while VDFNC's executive director Edith Cloutier acted as the show's host and moderator.

On the panel were individuals representing media, the city of Val-d'Or, Aboriginal perspectives from the community of Lac Simon, an academic and Vaugrande from Amnesty.

The grand finale for the week's activities was the annual Gabriel Commanda march against racism.

Despite frigid temperatures hovering around -20 that day, almost 1000 poeple marched to show their support of solidarity between all nations within the community and beyond.

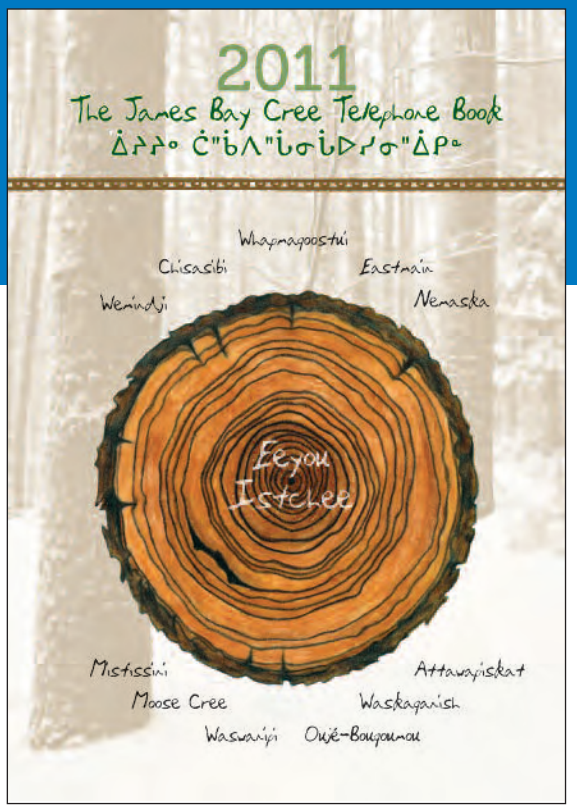
"SCHOOL CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS KINDERGARTEN AGE MARCHED ALONGSIDE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ELDERS WHO WERE BUSSED IN FROM NEARBY COMMUNITIES."

School children as young as kindergarten age marched alongside university students and Elders who were bussed in from nearby communities.

The end of the march ended with a grand celebration in the streets with live entertainment that featured Aboriginal hoop dancing and Pikogan rap artist Jérémy Kistabish.

According to Mark, there was also a sort of flash mob/ friendship dance that took place during the entertainment. People learned the dance moves prior to the event through a YouTube video and then when it was time a synchronized dance broke out.

While Mark said the extreme cold may have kept more folks off the street than previous years, all in all it was a fabulous week of sharing, learning and breaking down barriers.



James Bay Cree Telephone Book

Hear ye! Hear ye! The 2011 edition of the James Bay Cree Telephone has arrived in your community!

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Otherwise, you can call our office to pay by Mastercard: 514-272-3077.
Cost: $25 per phone book plus 11$ shipping and handling, total: $36
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Special thanks go out to everyone in the communities and in the band offices who contributed to the production of this year's phone book. Without you this project would not have been possible. Meegwetch!

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Shelter fundraiser a smashing success

Nakuset, executive director of the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal (NWSM), is thrilled to announce that their March 20 fundraiser at Montreal's Nouveau Palais went off without a hitch and brought in between $11,000 and $13,000.

The evening featured a dinner comprised of Aboriginal traditional cuisine from Quebec's various First Nations as well as an auction of donated items from different sources.

According to Nakuset, she will soon have a final tally of what the NWSM will actually be taking home from the event as they have yet to ascertain the final cost of food and other miscellaneous items, such as thank you gifts for the volunteers.

"We only expected to make about $5000. The ticket sales alone brought in about $5000 and then we received another $3000 from the Joe Norton Sahanatie Foundation," said Nakusset.

This does not even account for the auction. According to Nakuset among the donated items were a soapstone carving, various types of traditional mittens, a cradle board and paintings. The NWSM managed to auction 21

out of 26 items and the rest will be sold off at upcoming powwows.

The other problem behind the final tally is indeed a happy one – funds still haven't stopped trickling in.

"It was just overwhelming and people are really hearing our message. We still have money trickling in because the story was picked up by so many newspapers and we are still being contacted by people who want to help. One dentist from the Mohawk community even sent us $300," said Nakuset.

For more info or to make a donation: www.nwsm.info/

CWEIA on standby without funding

According to Holly Danyluk, the regional coordinator of the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association, the Cree Regional Authority has officially cut out funding for the CWEIA. The women's organization had been receiving funding from the Alfred Loon's Regional Development fund, however as Loon's funding was cut, he was unable to provide for the CWEIA in this year's fiscal plan.

The CWEIA has since submitted a five-year corporate plan to the Grand Council but as of March 31, they have not received a response and they are fearful that one will not be coming since March 31 is the deadline for most institutions to present their annual fiscal budgets.

The CWEIA is calling upon anyone who is concerned for the future of women and children in their communities to speak out publicly to their local and regional leaders so that they know just how much this organizations means to Crees and their future.

For more info, contact Danyluk at hdanyluk@cweia.org

Cree runs for the NDP in May election

In a historic move, the Grand Council's Romeo Saganash has thrown his name in the ring as a New Democratic Party candidate for the Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou riding.

According to the Montreal Gazette, while Saganash recognizes that it will be a huge challenge for him to venture into a new political arena, but he believes a win is possible.

Saganash will be attempting to oust Bloc Québécois MP Yvon Lévesque who has held the riding since 2004.

Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: www.tundracomics.com

feature

> THIS YEAR WAS PARTICULARLY CHILD FRIENDLY WITH A BABY LYNX TO SNUGGLE UP TO, EVEN THE BABY SKUNK GOT A FEW ADVANCES.

A rite of spring

Montreal's annual outdoors show celebrates 50 years of existence

By Will Nicholls

I turn 50 this year and this is a celebration for me so I understand the people from Salon Expert Chasse, Pêche et Camping (the Hunting, Fishing and Camping Show). After all it was 50 years ago Father Marcel de la Sablonnière founded the Salon Camping et Famille, which has developed into this Montreal mainstay.

Each year I return to see what's new, look at old favourites and estimate how something could help my time with the land better. It's all about survival, the way Crees live with the land and to know what can make life better. Once again survival doesn't mean it has to be difficult. Every Cree knows the feeling of their way of life.

If you're going to find something that enables you to better survive happier, then the largest outdoor show in Quebec will have something for you to think about.

There are over 250 exhibitors – including major and surprisingly minor but interesting manufacturers of boats, ATVs, trailers and hunting, fishing and camping equipment.

One of my favourite stops was the Italian custom-made gun company. These are handmade beauties that not many can afford to hold tenderly and with the utmost respect. I drooled with a desire just to experience the moment of perfection feeling the gun butt move against your shoulder when you shoot.

Now that you're feeling that, let me add to it by telling you the Canadian National Sportsmen's Shows, a non-profit organization, has given over $31 million to support nature conservation and protection. Now isn't that some-

thing to tell PETA. How much have you given in the last 50 years?

This year was particularly child friendly with a baby lynx to snuggle up to, even the baby skunk got a few advances.

Though some young ones tried their luck, it was mostly adults, including myself, who gave the crossbow a chance to interest us in a variation of archery.

The great thing is it doesn't matter whether you're looking for the latest fishing tackle, next generation of outdoor gear, a latest ecological miracle or expert advice on how to call more geese, this annual event is worth every moment you spend at it.

You can't just cruise through the sprawling openness of Place Bonaventure without realizing it's a place to talk and learn from skilled people.

The show for me has become another thing, a sign in itself. Late spring is a time of hope in the Cree communities. The winters are legend to people in the south. Even at the end of April we see the lakes, streams and most rivers covered in ice, but through signs we know the warmth of summer will eventually come. Now is the time of the spring goose hunt. It is a time to go back to our roots. Yes, the camps have modern conveniences and the geese will fly. Later the walleye will spawn and Crees will be ready.

Our memories are kindled and fire up the anticipation of what has been an annual rite of spring for the Cree, a celebration of a cherished way of life and a place where families can grow together. There's more, of course, but you'll have to experience it for yourself at next year's Salon.

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The art of calls

By Danielle Valade

Calling game, whatever it may be – ducks, geese, deer, moose, turkeys, crows, predators – can be done simply by using your mouth, hand and a little practice. But as anyone who has hunted knows, if you go *au naturel* your vocal chords might be a tad rough after the hunt, especially if it involves migratory birds.

So, thanks to evolution, man has created calls made out of wood, which bring a different dynamic to the hunt and, most importantly, a variety of sounds. Every call maker has his secrets for crafting calls that are faster, have a longer range and try to sound as realistic as possible.

You now have on the market all kinds of calls made with different material. Prices vary depending on the quality of the call and the time required to craft it. You can find calls made out of polycarbonate (which is injected in a mould), acrylic, delrin, and, of course, wood and even exotic wood.

Each type is interesting, but as Rhéal Charlebois of Recall Design says, "For me, the material that comes closest to sounding like a real goose is wood. I love its porosity and feel. It has also less volume than an acrylic call, which is an advantage in the final phase of the calling, when the birds are getting close. It's also easier to take care of. After a rainy hunt, simply open your call and let it dry out."

Charlebois added that acrylic calls also have their advantages. "They are very dense, like glass, so they offer an incredible volume level. They are stable under high temperature variance, and they require less care than wood."

It really depends on your level as a hunter and your budget. Recall Design makes about 150 award-winning calls per year. All are true art pieces, precisely crafted by hand and tuned to perfection for the most realism and easy blowing. All are numbered and signed. Charlebois uses material of the highest quality, even exotic wood. You can even have a special collector's piece custom-made to your specifications.

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Calls are also available at B.C. Sports in Amos and Cree Sport & Outdoors Centre in Mistissini.

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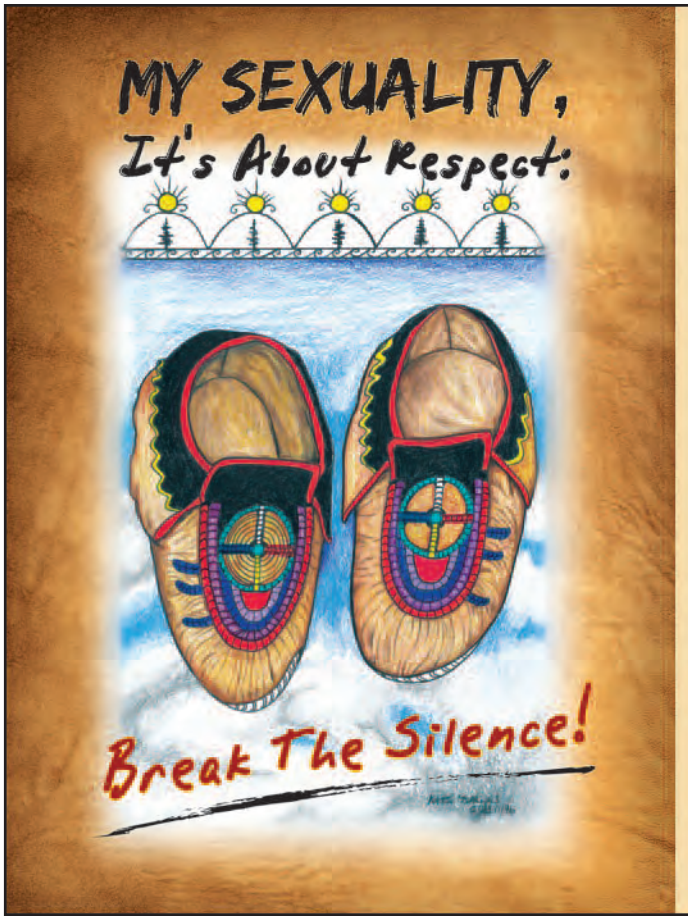

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Quebec Native Women launches its awareness campaign on sexual assault:

My Sexuality, it's About Respect: Break the Silence!

With the goal of empowering members of Aboriginal communities in Quebec to the issues of sexual assault, Quebec Native Women developed an awareness campaign that was launched on March 24th 2011, in Kahnawake.

The main objectives of the campaign are to:
- Provide awareness tools to prevent the harm caused by sexual assault.
- Empower the members of Aboriginal communities to experience their sexuality with dignity and respect.

For information, please contact:

Josiane Loiselle-Boudreau
Health Coordinator
Quebec Native Women
Phone: (450) 632-0088 ext. 223
Email: health@faq-qwn.org

Satellite phones: are they worth it?

By Will Nicholls

I remember a number of years back one of the Cree chiefs lent me his satellite phone to call the office. He was proud of it and I was impressed. This was before cell phones were as common as today. Satellite phones never really caught on but when Future Mobile Solutions offered me one for two weeks I decided to try it out.

I wasn't as impressed as I was back then but I saw possibilities for them in Eeyou Istchee. Today's phones added features we take for granted in regular cell phones. There's SMS texting, email and a mini USB data port. The cost of a call is high at $1.22 a minute. Other costs are above average when compared to cell phones so I would recommend renting a satellite phone for the times you would need it.

Rental rates are $9.49 per day or $249.95 per month. Incoming calls and texts are free but outgoing is billed by the minute. The phone would be useful during goose break and other activities on the land.

This is a perfect tool for the North. If your vehicle breaks down on the James Bay Highway you can easily call for help. Medical emergencies while hunting would have a faster response time. Calling for needed supplies or when you need a helicopter or bush plane are another use. Telling a friend you're going to be staying longer or are ready to be picked up would be a snap. I've seen people who have run out of gas or had motor problems while fishing that had to wait for a chance passerby to assist them. A satellite phone would have saved them time and worry. Workforce teams in the field can coordinate with each other and keep in touch with the main office improving productivity. These are only a few possibilities of the usefulness of a satellite phone. It was a little rough during a snowstorm but I still managed to make a call.

For more info: Richard Lipari at 1-866-775-2355 ext. 205 or www.futuremobilesolutions.com

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Recognizing the best

The Regional Quebec Tourism Awards Gala James Bay and Eeyou Istchee was a resounding success

By Will Nicholls

Chibougamau hosted 150 people for the Regional Quebec 2011 Tourism Awards Gala on March 10. Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come was on hand to congratulate the winners. Also attending were Oujé-Bougoumou Chief Louise Wapachee and Mistissini Deputy Chief John S. Matoush, Ungava MNA Luc Ferland, Lebel-sur-Quévillon Mayor Gérald Lemoyne (also Mayor of the infamous Municipality of Baie-James), Chapais Mayor Steve Gamache and, last but not least, the host, Chibougamau Mayor Manon Cyr.

Everyone agreed that both James Bay Tourism and Eeyou Istchee Tourism made the night one to remember.

The winners were: Rocky Neeposh, fishing guide for Awashish Outdoor Adventures in Mistissini; Sylvie Cauchon, owner of the Gîte de la Rivière, Dulieux Lake; Dany Girard, personality of the year in tourism as volunteer for the Festival du doré Baie-James; Thomas Coon and René Savage, co-presidents of Eeyou Istchee / Baie-James ACCORD Tourism Niche Committee; Dany Aubin and Patrick Bélisle, chef and assistant chef at Le Bistro restaurant in the Chibougamau Hotel; and Gaston Cooper of Oujé-Bougoumou, communication and marketing officer at the Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association.

Six special mentions were awarded to individuals and enterprises involved in tourism. The mentions went to Annie Berthelot, Anie Morin and Éric Simard, the three volunteers who initiated La Petite Séduction project in Lebel-sur-Quévillon; Rose Blackned, manager of the Kanio Kashee Lodge in Waskaganish; the city of Chibougamau for the Stevenson Lake trail in Obalski Park; and finally to the Economic Development Corporation of Chapais, for the Campbell Lake trail.

Marie-Christine Mailhiot, the president of Baie-James Tourism, and Sherman Herodier, the president of Eeyou Istchee Tourism, would like to congratulate the award winners and special recognition recipients.

Again this year, several sponsors were present and their contributions made the evening a success: Caisses Desjardins, main sponsor of the gala, Tourisme Québec, the Baie-James Development Society, the SADCs of Northern Quebec, the City of Chibougamau, Oujé-Bougoumou Eenouch Association, Oujé-Bougoumou Eenou Company, the Cree Nation of Mistissini, Nemaska Development Corporation, Hydro-Québec, Ungava MNA Luc Ferland, the Baie-James Municipality, the City of Chapais, the City of Matagami, the City of Lebel-sur-Quevillon, the Baie-James Conférence régionale des élus, the Cree Construction and Development Company, the Cree Nation of Eastmain, the Cree Nation of Waswanipi, the Cree Nation of Wemindji, the Cree Regional Authority / Board of Compensation, Air Creebec, the magazine the Nation / Beesum Communications, the Air Creebec Destinations magazine, Le Jamésien newspaper, La Sentinelle newspaper, Planète Radio 93.5, CIAU FM Radisson and CHEF Radio 99.9.

Such an outstanding contribution from regional organizations illustrates their continued interest in tourism. With their renewed support and presence, year after year, these sponsors demonstrate the importance of rewarding excellence and of recognizing the innovation and know-how of the men and women who weave the fabric of our tourism industry.

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Check out Recall Designs goose calls on their website: www.recalldesigns.com.

A new place to lay your head

The CREECO-Trahan owned Comfort Suites in Val-d'Or is finally open for business

By Amy German

It's been a long time coming! What was once an idea tossed around between CREECO's major players – Jack Blacksmith, Rodney Hester and the late Albert W. Diamond – has now become a reality. The Crees finally have their own hotel in Val-d'Or and business is already booming.

The Crees of CREECO, in partnership with Trahan Holdings, as in Val d'Or Mayor Fernand Trahan, held a grand opening ceremony and party on March 17 to celebrate the momentous event and many a toast was made to celebrate this expansion of Cree economic interests.

"There was a real excitement leading up to the event, and a real buzz going around the room. People were getting anxious for it to start. As people began congregating, many were given tours of the hotel and shown the different styles of rooms that are available," said Rodney Hester, CREECO's Business Development Coordinator.

Hester and CREECO's Tanya Pash have been the ones working alongside Trahan Holdings, learning the hospitality industry on the fly while ironing out all of the intricate dealings involved in opening up a hotel.

The new Comfort Suites Hotel is a 50/50 joint venture partnership between CREECO and Trahan, whose family has been in the hotel business in Val-d'Or for generations. Trahan is not only the Mayor of Val-d'Or, but his company also owns L'Escale Hotel right across the street from the new project.

While the two hotels are in competition with each other, the L'Escale features a bar and restaurant along with event reception halls ideal for weddings and celebrations.

The Comfort Suites is geared more toward a business clientele, offering only breakfast services but also conference rooms and state-of-the-art facilities geared towards the business tourism industry that is booming in Val-d'Or.

"The grand opening was very well attended by the Crees and the non-Native business population of Val-d'Or so we really had the best of both worlds at the event," said Jonathan Saganash, CREECO's communications officer.

"It was great to see everyone come together in harmony to celebrate the opening of this project that is certain to be a success for many years to come. We will maximize the returns of this project for the benefit of the Cree people."

Hester, who acted as emcee for the evening, along with CREECO President Jack Blacksmith and Mayor Trahan, all spoke about their moment of pride and what it meant to them.

Hester said what struck him the most was acknowledging the fact that the project had finally become reality.

"I like the fact that this hotel is a cut above the rest; it really is the nicest hotel in Val-d'Or. Marc St-Gelais, the Development Director Choice Hotel's Eastern Division, was saying that it could be the nicest hotel of its class in Quebec, being a Quality Inn Suites," said Hester.

Blacksmith's address focused on the history of Crees in Val-d'Or's business sector over the past 30 years with companies like Petronord, Kepa Transport, the Board of Compensation and Air Creebec.

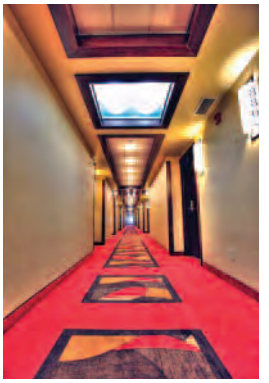
"We've had a lot of experience doing business in Val-d'Or and we looked at a hotel project way back when, but it wasn't the right time. But, now here we are today," said Blacksmith.

While there was skepticism about Crees opening up a hotel years ago when the idea was first being bounced around, business pioneers like Blacksmith and Albert Diamond, who first championed the idea, had the intuition that this would one day work.

Blacksmith is proud of the project because of what the hotel has become and the potential it possesses. He describes the suites as "absolutely beautiful." And with non-smoking rooms and a business atmosphere, the hope is that those looking to host conferences and meetings will take advantage of a hotel that is a cut above the rest.

"We have one large conference room that can seat 20-25, maybe 30 people, and then we have the Albert W. Diamond Executive Conference room which seats about 15-20. We also have a series of larger suites with tables and chairs that are geared towards those who want to hold their own personal meetings and those can accommodate four to six people," said Blacksmith.

The fact that the facility doesn't have a bar and restaurant is ideal for the new hotel, Blacksmith explained, because these kinds of amenities can eat up a lot of revenue when they're not in use. And since a restaurant is only as good as its chef,



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not having one means that funds won't be wasted when business is slow. Instead, patrons can head across the street for dinner and a nightcap.

Since CREECO's revenues are reinvested in the Cree nation for the benefit of all Crees, this almost guarantees that the new hotel may become the destination of choice for business or pleasure when Crees are in the vicinity. With this kind of customer loyalty, Blacksmith and company may meet their goals of maintaining the low vacancy rate that will assure them a successful year.

> "WITH THE OPENING CELEBRATED, THE CARPETS ROLLED OUT FOR NEW GUESTS AND AN EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM NAMED AFTER ALBERT W. DIAMOND, THE NEW COMFORT SUITES IS A SYMBOL OF CREE PRIDE AND SUCCESS."

"The first year is important and we have been doing very well to date. I hope that we hover around the 80% capacity level. If we get that 80% in the first year, we will be a very successful business," said Blacksmith.

He admits the project would never have seen the light of day, if it hadn't had the perfect combination of team players all working together.

Had Trahan Holdings not approached CREECO with the desire to go ahead with this project, Blacksmith admits the hotel may not have come together as smoothly as it did.

"Trahan has been in the hotel business for years and he knows all of the ins and outs. Just having him as a partner is a real plus for us because we've been learning as we go. Both Tanya and Rodney are very much learning from the master when it comes to hotel ownership," said Blacksmith.

On the administrative side of things, Michael Prince, the hotel's newly appointed manager, feels he's also getting in on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Prince held a similar position at Val-d'Or's Native Friendship Centre for several years and though he gave up a labour of love for the new hotel, his heart is mending quickly.

"When I had the opportunity to work here, I knew it was going to be a new challenge where I had just sold them my soul for the minimum of the next three to six months. At that, for the first year or two, this job is going to take up an enormous amount of my personal time too. But, how many times in a lifetime does anyone get the chance to open up a new hotel and be its director?" asked Prince.

Having worked with the Crees in Mistissini for 11 years prior to his tenure at the Friendship Centre, Prince said he jumped at the new opportunity because it was with the Crees.

He saw it as an opportunity to challenge himself and learn from so many great minds when it came to running not just a hotel but seeing the Crees venture into the hospitality industry.

"If this goes well, the Crees may, if they enjoy the experience, have found another means for self-sufficiency. Especially with having businesses like Air Creebec, entering into the hotel business is the next logical step," said Prince.

Looking at the hotel from an administrative perspective, while Prince is proud of the hotel's aesthetics, it doesn't compare to the pride and glory he feels for the team he manages and works with.

While he can look around any room and acknowledge that he may have been part of the hotel's history, hanging a particular frame or helping set up one item or another, he says the teamwork among his employees was crucial to its successful opening.

"It took a lot to get this place opened. I had housekeeping ladies putting chairs together next to electricians and plumbers finishing off their work. With the maintenance guys we were pulling 16-hour days and everyone just kept looking at it as the kind of thing where we knew the opening was looming and we had to get it open.

"But, everybody just pulled it together and it was a really good thing today because now everybody has that team spirit."

With the opening celebrated, the carpets rolled out for new guests and an executive conference room named after Albert W. Diamond, the new Comfort Suites is a symbol of Cree pride and success.

While those within it may still be refining their skills and fine-tuning their operations, Prince said the biggest problem he is facing is the kind of problem that every hotel wants – everybody wants to stay or do business there. During its first week, the hotel was actually overbooked.

In time, Val-d'Or's newest hotel may just be the best place for you to lay your head.

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Bon *Goose Break*!

Après un long hiver, c'est maintenant le temps, pour bien des Cris d'Eeyou Istchee, de partir dans la nature pour profiter du *Goose Break* annuel. Ces deux semaines de vacances sont souvent synonymes de moments en famille, de visites, et d'occasion de renouer avec la nature.

La chasse au temps du *Goose Break* est l'une des plus importantes activités traditionnelles pratiquées par les Cris. C'est l'occasion idéale pour les familles de se retrouver et de passer du temps ensemble loin des distractions modernes. Je souhaite que les conditions printanières soient favorables et permettent une chasse sécuritaire, ainsi qu'une bonne récolte.

À titre de ministre responsable des Affaires autochtones, je suis heureux de vous souhaiter, à tout un chacun, une belle saison.

Happy Goose Break!

After a long winter, many Eeyou Istchee Cree will be heading into the wild for their annual Goose Break, two weeks of time off that often mean time for family, time for visiting, and time to reconnect with the land and nature.

Goose Break hunting is one of the most important traditional activities carried out by the Cree. It's a perfect opportunity for families to spend time together away from modern distractions. I hope that the spring weather will cooperate and enable a safe hunt and bountiful harvest.

As Minister responsible for Native Affairs, I am happy to extend best wishes to all for a great hunting season.

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The diabetic elephant in the room

Shifting the focus away from diabetes to the obesity that causes the disease

By Amy German

The Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) once again crunched the numbers on how many Crees have succumbed to diabetes in the past decade and, like in all previous studies, the numbers have increased.

"It wasn't very different from the last one. The message hasn't really changed in the last 10 years. Diabetes continues to be a big problem with young people. Nothing has changed except that the numbers are higher," said David Dannenbaum, a medical doctor who worked on the study.

According to Dannenbaum, the incidence rate is roughly 19 per thousand so there are roughly two cases per 100 people for the total Cree population. This works out to about 150 new cases of diabetes per year that are diagnosed by the CBHSSJB.

While the numbers aren't surprising, Dannenbaum said what is surprising is that as each of these reports on diabetes is published, people seem to anticipate a major change but that never happens as diabetes is a secondary effect to an even greater problem.

"More and more people are getting type two diabetes because of obesity and lack of exercise," said Dannenbaum.

The Crees are not the only population in the world that has this problem. The diabetes rate is literally exploding amongst Indigenous peoples all over the world who have started to adopt western diets and become less active.

This is because Indigenous peoples have what Dannenbaum describes as the hunter-gatherer hemotype, where their bodies are inclined hang on to every calorie and store it in the waist rather than the legs.

"If you look at Aboriginal populations in New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, you see this. India is being devastated by diabetes right now, it is a huge problem and China is seeing it too," said Dannenbaum.

But, it isn't just the size of people's waistbands that is at the heart of the issue, the perception of obesity becoming the norm is just as dangerous.

While being overweight used to be a sign of prosperity amongst Crees since it was a sign that the family had a good hunter, Dannenbaum believes that this train of thought is still prevalent. That being slim is the sign of having a bad hunter in the family and is therefore frowned upon.

"A lot of people today see individuals who have a healthy body weight as being sick and this is a Cree myth that needs to be dealt with. When people lose weight and become healthier, everybody in their community tells them that they look ill. Then they will feel bad about it and try to gain the weight back," said Dannenbaum.

"THE MESSAGE HASN'T REALLY CHANGED IN THE LAST 10 YEARS. DIABETES CONTINUES TO BE A BIG PROBLEM WITH YOUNG PEOPLE. NOTHING HAS CHANGED EXCEPT THAT THE NUMBERS ARE HIGHER."

Despite this, Dannenbaum still believes that there is hope for the Cree people and that through a changing of attitude the problem can be reversed.

He recalled working with the Cree a decade ago when diabetes was still a hush-hush topic because it was shameful. A decade later, and the subject is so far out of the closet that it's become comfortable dinner conversation.

Hope at the CBHSSJB is that within time the same will happen with obesity because they believe it to be a taboo issue amongst Crees. But, that taboo needs to be stripped of its status.

This is urgent because diabetes is just a symptom of a greater problem, that if someone develops the disease it is simply a symptom of unhealthy living for far too long.

"If you can deal with the obesity, then there are many studies which show that you can prevent diabetes by dealing with obesity and that this will work better than any pill," said Dannenbaum.

The biggest part of tackling the issue outside of just raising awareness is getting people to make the right decisions when it comes to making food choices and getting active.

While Dannenbaum acknowledged that fresh fruits, vegetables and lean meats are much more expensive than what the average consumer wants to pay, people will have to accept it. If they want to eat healthy, they will have to pay for it.

"People are gaining weight from what they are putting in their carts in the stores. If you look you will see chips, pop, pizza pockets and all sorts of things that you just pop into the microwave and then eat. You also see that the packages containing three servings are being eaten by one person in one sitting. This is the area where people need to think about what they are doing," said Dannenbaum.

At the same time he sympathizes with the people in this situation since part of it he believes stems from the effects of residential schools because people never had the chance to learn how to cook and were also force fed vegetables. Unfortunately that effect has been passed down through generations.

Couple that with the fact that some families are now having to adapt to both mom and dad working outside of the home and the end result is some Cree children are going to the local restaurant twice a day to eat poutine instead of nutritious meals.

On the Public Health side of the CBHSSJB, Solomon Awashish, chronic disease program officer, is looking at how Crees can best prevent the disease

and the impact it is having on the Cree population. Through the Maamuu Nakaahehtaau project, the CBHSSJB's latest endeavour to prevent diabetes, Awashish and other members of his team have been educating and listening to the Cree people to see what the public wants in order to fight the disease.

When looking at the new study, Awashish said what concerns him most is that Crees are being diagnosed in their early 40s as opposed to in their 60s like the rest of the general population. This means that Crees are enjoying significantly less of their lifetime living healthy and more of their years from middle age onward trying to avoid complications from the disease or treating them by enduring amputations.

Like Dannenbaum, Awashish recognizes that it's an attitude or philosophy of thought adjustment that needs to be made throughout Cree society.

"Walking is the best exercise you could choose, but in Cree society we have this thing where you don't just want to exercise for no reason. Crees don't want to walk just for the sake of walking. If you go for a walk, it's to check a snare or a bear's den that they discovered 10 years ago," said Awashish.

The same goes for dispelling certain myths that have gripped the Cree population. Right now Public Health is trying to promote drinking water instead of juice or pop because of the extra calories these beverages have.

Many Crees don't trust their drinking water since there have been problems in the past. According to the CBHSSJB, the drinking water in all of the Cree communities is routinely tested and is safe unless that community is under a water advisory. Studies have even shown that tap water is usually safer than drinking water as it is tested more frequently.

Instead, many Crees flock to the stores to buy their beverage of choice, which usually isn't water. Some will get iced tea in a bottle thinking it is a healthier option, but it isn't.

"People have to learn that iced tea has the same amount sugar as regular pop. When you look at the numbers it is really the same thing and we discourage it," said Awashish.

Other myths in Eeyou Istchee aren't much different from those in the south, that the wonder diets advertised in the media – like South Beach, Atkins, or eating for your blood type – are the keys to ending obesity and diabetes. While some of these programs may work short term, they often have a pendulum effect where the dieter will lose weight, but then quickly gain it back. It all works under the premise that there's a "magic pill" that will solve the problem instead of doing the hard work – eating healthy and exercising.

"Eating healthy, exercising regularly and taking the medication that your doctor prescribes is what is good. People who really take care of themselves actually know their sugar levels better than anyone else and how they react with their medication. It is up to the individual to work with the doctors to get the right medication or dose. This comes with experience, taking care of yourself more regularly and using the gluco-meter to check your blood sugars. It's all a matter of balancing your lifestyle," said Awashish.

Through the Maamuu Nakaahehtaau project, Awashish said the CBHSSJB is looking to the people to see what can be offered to help them change their lifestyles and end diabetes for good.

If there's a demand for it, the CBHSSJB will work on providing what is needed and this includes help from nutritionists, exercise programs, support groups and psychological assistance.

"With the way things were in the past, we had come up with some of the ideas that we wanted to try out on the communities, but we have now reversed our thinking as this should come from the people instead of the top down," said Awashish.

"WALKING IS THE BEST EXERCISE YOU COULD CHOOSE, BUT IN CREE SOCIETY WE HAVE THIS THING WHERE YOU DON'T JUST WANT TO EXERCISE FOR NO REASON. CREES DON'T WANT TO WALK JUST FOR THE SAKE OF WALKING."

gowlings' aboriginal law group
wishes you a happy spring cultural break!

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Showcasing healthy living and tasty foods

The 2011 Expo Manger santé et vivre vert show serves up the goods and much more

By Amy German

When it comes to eating healthier and living greener, just about anywhere you look these days there is someone selling a product or concept geared towards increasing your vitality or decreasing the footprint you leave on this planet when your time is up.

So, if you are looking to optimize your living potential or what you can do to lead a "greener" life, the best place to check out what's new on the market is Montreal's annual Expo Manger santé et vivre vert (Eat Well and Living Green Expo) which is held every March at the Palais de Congrès.

Having covered this show several times over the years with Will Nicholls, my editor-in-chief and husband, we always know what to expect when we walk through the doors of the enormous showroom: there will be the good, the bad, the mediocre and the outright ridiculous. This year's show didn't fail to disappoint.

And, like every other year, there is always one particular product that's the buzz of the show. One year it was blueberries, rich in powerful antioxidants that can hinder the development of disease and as natural as Mother Nature intended them to be. Last year, it was organic fair-trade chocolate, which in small quantities can act as a "super food" for its natural antioxidant and anti-depressant qualities, but in larger quantities can pack on pounds faster than a bag of Cheetos.

This year's buzz food was elderberry products. Touted to be even higher in antioxidants than blueberries, raspberries and acai, elderberry products could be found just about everywhere throughout the showroom.

Sylvain, at the SURO Biosambucus table, had a wide variety of products featuring elderberries. Jams, drinks, syrups to fight colds and flu, and even vinaigrettes made from elderberry flowers.

"We are the first organic elderberry producers in Canada. Elderberry is even higher in antioxidants than blueberries. There is a very good future for elderberries," he said. His last statement almost led us to believe that he was selling stocks in elderberry production… maybe he was.

The jam had an intense berry taste, somewhere between blueberries and red grapes that went down nicely. In fact, so did everything else Sylvain was hawking.

For more info: www.suro.ca/en/who-are-we.php

With a newly purchased bottle of the elderberry flower and garlic vinaigrette (savoury, garlicky and with well-balanced acidity), off we went to other tables.

Next we hit the Three Acres cosmetics table where founder and co-owner Lillian Morale was happy to show off her beeswax-made creams, lip balms and massaging creams.

"Beeswax has a component in it that's the same as human skin so it is a very compatible product. You can put it on and it will help to protect your skin without blocking your pores. Anything you put on your skin you should be able to eat," she said.

"WE WERE QUITE ENTICED TO SEE A YOUNG MAN NAMED CHANAKA FROM SRI LANKA WHO MANNING A TABLE IN HIS TRADITIONAL GARB, PURVEYING A DELIGHTFUL ARRAY OF THE MOST WILDLY FRAGRANT SPICES AND TEAS."

Sampling the products, they did have a luxurious quality that was felt immediately, thick rich creams that smelled only of beeswax and a hint of honey. Their grapefruit-scented lip balm was also a hit. Though I am not a fan of the flavour, the scent was invigorating and refreshing.

For more info: www.3acres.ca

Moving on, we noticed a young man named Chanaka from Sri Lanka who was manning a table in his traditional garb and selling an array of the most wildly fragrant spices and teas.

"Here we have Arayuma fair-trade organic teas and spices. They are all grown by organic, fair-trade farmers in Sri Lanka. Everything is packaged right after the harvest so our customers get the freshest and the best spices ever," he said.

Handing us a sample of Arayuma's True Cinnamon to take home, Chanaka passed a small bowl of it under our noses to highlight the difference of what he described as the other imposters on the market. The difference was immediately detectable, the scent sweeter and spicier and the texture was also visibly different. The bark was crumbly, the colour more intense and the flavour earthier.

Perhaps there was something to what he was saying? The teas he had for the offering were just as fragrant and flavourful and for that he received our stamp of approval.

For more info: www.arayuma.com/

With olfactory pleasures on the brain, we headed over to the Alterah Bio Natural Cosmetics counter to take in their natural perfumes and products.

Right off the bat we were impressed. With that said, Nicholls and I are both self-confessed perfume addicts.

"These are all natural scents and scrubs," said François Legault, one of the co-owners for the North American distribution company. "These products from France are organic and all natural. There are no minerals in the products or oil byproducts. Each product is available in 14 different colours, representing the 14 different themes for each scent. They are a blend of essential oils and so they also have aroma therapeutic effects and have been named with a key word to summarize the concept for each scent."

We particularly loved the purple or "Balance" scent, a blend of lavender and lemon, as well as "Oxygen", which had herbal smell with an intense rosemary edge, and "Freshness", a grassy scent that was very spring and revitalizing to the nostrils.

For more info: www.elleiah.com

We were intrigued by the beverages being offered by the French granola-hippie family at the Maté Factor healthy energizer tea, so much so that I actually tried the product.

"These teas are all natural and made from teas that are grown in South America. They are natural energizers that do not contain caffeine," said Brigitte, the matriarch of the clan.

While the tea certainly packed a punch, it was almost a little too intense. Kind of like the time I discovered eating chocolate-covered espresso beans was bad for the rotgut and overly-agitated, overly-alert buzz. While the cinnamon rooibos with honey was lovely, warming, spicy and fragrant, I was only told after consuming it that it stimulates your intestines. Down the drain the rest of that sample went.

For more info: www.matefactor.com/yerba-mate-nutrition.html

Being a lover of all forms of dairy fat (and duck fat, goose fat and a laundry list of others), we headed over to the L'Ancêtre Cheese table to enjoy the freebies and make a few purchases.

Having sampled them before, I knew I was in for a treat. While these organic and mostly lactose-free cheeses are widely available in most grocery stores, there were a few newbies on the market: a pasteurized brie (that was really odd) and two reduced-salt flavoured cheeses, one in garlic herb and the other a jalapeno onion, that were excellent.

I purchased my favourite, the reduced-fat "Frugal" 7% cheddar that I've always loved for its squeaky texture and saltiness. Nicholls went for the three-year-old cheddar, another love for its intense flavour and texture.

Next up, we were delighted to meet William, who was selling nuts and other dried goods for the Nature's Source and Organic Traditions brands.

While sugar free, they were sweet and had a lovely texture that would be ideal for baking, in a nut mix or a yoghurt, in a salad or even a stir fry to give it an exotic Asian taste.

Available in 95% of health food stores in Quebec, the company had a dark chocolate covered almond that was sensational as the ratio of chocolate-to-almond was a perfect balance. With cocoa imported from Peru and sugar cane used to sweeten the chocolate, the imported Italian almonds were in perfect natural harmony with each other.

"The big difference with our line is that it doesn't stay on your hips," said William as chocolate was lower in calories than usual.

Another standout product was the Solo Fruit Sorbet, which were free of sugar, gluten and eggs, and available in most grocery stores.

I tasted the raspberry and then the lime-ginger-coconut – both of which were bursting with flavour.

The raspberry tasted as though the highest quality available raspberries in the world had been blended together to create a concoction of impeccable sweetness and flavour. It was hard to believe that the product contained no sugar.

The coconut-ginger-lime was just incredible as the flavour was so complex while being so satisfying. If you've ever travelled anywhere tropical, within seconds this sorbet brings you back there under a warm sun with sand between your toes. It is the closest you can get to a tropical experience without going away.

We were also quite pleased with the Divine Harvest jams. The berry spread was delicious, all-natural and didn't contain any sugars or additives. These products had chia grains and oil added to them to improve upon the nutrient content, making them even higher in antioxidants as well as in Omega 3 and 6. The product is organic and made in Quebec.

Despite the fact that it sounded like they would taste like a Frankenstein mish-mash of healthy products that lack in flavour, these jams actually came out on top as something that was high quality, healthy and flavourful.

For more info: divineharvest.ca

When it came to oils for cooking and flavourings, the Maison Orphée were certainly our hit of the day! Imported

from a wide variety of places, Maison Orphée cold presses the oils in Quebec and puts them straight out on the market.

They sell a wide variety of incredibly healthy cooking oils and a series of oils that are used for flavourings. There were many varieties and hordes of people fighting to try them all. Our favourites were the Walnut of Perigord oil, which is rich, nutty, smooth and refreshing; the Toasted Sesame Oil, which is similar to the ones found in most Asian markets, but this is much more intense because of the toasting; and the Fruity & Robust extra virgin olive oil, which lived up to its name.

We liked the three so much that we bought them and will certainly buy them again. Available in the organic or health-food sections of most grocers, these products are totally worth it.

Another major hit for us, particularly with Eeyou Istchee in mind, was the Calypso water-cooler system. While both of us believe that selling water is a racket invented to steal our money, many Crees still prefer bottled water.

"The Calypso water bag has several advantages over the 18L bottles that people usually attach to water coolers. The idea is to reduce the amount of the polycarbonate bottles used for water coolers as they contain a great deal of Bisphenol A (leaks estrogen-like chemical into your water) and are not recyclable," said sales rep Pierre Renaud.

For more info: www.calypsowater.com/calypso-water-coolers.html

Of the stranger products available, the CookUp 200 solar barbecue is an environmental product for sunny days only.

"The CookUp 200 is our star product and is very easy to use. All you do is position it in front of the sun and then the mirrors, which are curved, reflect the sun's rays back into the middle where the heat becomes very intense, up to 400 degrees within two minutes, so you can easily cook up steaks or sausages. You could also use it like a hot plate to cook up a soup or a stew at a tailgate party or at a camp," said sales rep Marie-Claude.

This large and somewhat fragile contraption (panels are a semi-pliable plastic) runs for a whopping $550 and is available in three different formats.

For more info: www.solarcooker-at-cantinawest.com/cookup_200-parabolic_cooker.html

Veering over to the outright absurd, Nicholls and I were both absolutely offended the Eco-Detox detoxifying baths that apparently draw the "toxins" out of your system, but really they just make for a gross mess to stick your feet into. This was both a waste of time and money. By adding this product to water, minerals turn the water brown and convince the unsuspecting rube that their body is leaching toxins through their feet.

These kinds of products crop up every so often. CBC's Market Place recently did a show on this where elderly people were being scammed as they had been told that their water wasn't good enough to drink but in reality these clients are being fooled by a reverse osmosis science trick. Instead of buying products like these, educate yourself about them first.

For more info: www.cbc.ca/marketplace/2011/cleanwater-dirtytricks/

The two biggest stinkers of the day had to be the T-Zone Vibration Health Technology vibration health machine that claims to burn 150-200 calories by shaking you. Apparently the act of vibrating the entire body helps the muscles contract and therefore burns up calories. But if that were true, we could all just sit on the washer for a spin cycle after the holidays to be bikini-fit by spring.

Also, dubious was the trial table put out by the Clinique Anti-Douleur. This bed-like contraption was hooked up to some magical magnetic machine, which was supposed to rid the body of back pain and a variety of other pains.

"DID IT ACTUALLY DO ANYTHING FOR NICHOLLS: YES. IT MADE HIM LAUGH AT THE FACT THAT I GOT STUCK LISTENING TO THE SALES PITCH WHILE HE RESTED." WAS HIS BACK ANY BETTER FOR IT? NO!

Nicholls lay down on the table for eight minutes to give the contraption a try. He removed everything magnetic from his pockets and dumped them into my purse in fear of demagnetizing his bankcards or being impaled by his house keys when they became charged by this machine.

While Nicholls' eight minutes helped cure sort of back pain, the sales rep made me sit through eight solid minutes of a pitch that touted the value of this product.

What I came away with was that the product had emerged from France (home to many experimental medical treatments that often have no founding in science) and that the magnetic treatment would over a series of treatment cure the patient of all of back problems. All the patient has to do is just lie there and be magnetized.

Could this contraption possibly treat some medical problems, maybe? Did it actually do anything for Nicholls: yes. It made him laugh at the fact that I got stuck listening to the sales pitch while he rested. Was his back any better for it? No!

And with that, the two of us look forward to more fun and games at the 2012 edition of this exposition.

Hour time

By Lyle Stewart

Looking back, to late 1995, it might not have been the best moment to take a job as news editor at the Montreal alternative newsweekly, Hour. It was a week after the referendum on sovereignty, and the small but feisty gang of anglo writers and editors at Hour were feeling the stress in a workplace dominated by the much larger and older French-language publication, Voir, whose owners had founded Hour only two years before.

Aside from the general hostility that Jacques Parizeau had helped whip up by blaming the narrow Oui loss on "money and the ethnic vote" (the latter meaning anyone non-francophone), working for an anglophone cultural product in those uncertain days was far from a secure career move. It was widely assumed that a second referendum would soon follow, and that a massive exodus of the kinds of folks who read the paper and patronized its advertisers would be inevitable. At least, that was the gloomy analysis that pervaded most English media in Canada back then.

But we were young, we had nothing to lose and besides, it was cheap to live in economically ravaged Montreal. Many other creative types from across the country were here taking advantage of the rock-bottom rents, low tuition and the fin-de-siècle atmosphere that fed what would soon become a thriving alternative culture in the arts, music and politics. A culture that eventually won Montreal international notice and acclaim. And at Hour, we were right at the centre of it, growing with a new community, nurturing and being nurtured by it.

If I indulge my rose-coloured nostalgia it's because, this week, the Hour magazine that Montreal has known for 18 years is disappearing. Its owner, Communications Voir, is dismissing its longtime staff and replacing the paper with something it hopes to produce for next to nothing using what is euphemistically called "user-generated content." For all intents and purposes, however, the newsweekly, at which legions of talented and accomplished people got their start or really gained a public profile, is dead.

And that's cause for sadness and alarm, not only for the people who worked there. What, I wonder, does it mean for the cultural types and their events and their politics that were first covered in Hour's pages, and often nowhere else?

It's an important question, because if Arcade Fire is today a Grammy winner, it's because there was a vibrant musical community in which they could grow, feed off and try out their original ideas. Some of the dancers we covered are now running their own internationally celebrated company in New York City. Many of the issues that we wrote about then and were snubbed by others as radical and marginal are now part of the mainstream dialogue. People looked to us, and other alternative papers around North America, as a place to find identity and information and new ways of thinking.

When I look at the people who worked at the paper since 1993, I find incredibly successful talented people who have gone on to build amazing careers. Hour alumni are award-winning journalists at top newspapers and electronic media. They have responded to other callings, in science, academia or activism, that was nurtured by the kind of creative pressure that Hour placed on the people who produced it. In talking about this piece with a former editor, we agreed to draw up a list of Hour grads and tag them with a "where-are-they-now" bio. It will be impressive.

Some would say we were a victim of own success. Indeed, the Montreal neighbourhood where much of this cultural ferment was concentrated – Plateau Mont-Royal – soon became unaffordable for the typical penniless artists and activists who had nothing to lose in pushing the envelope in the 1990s. That may have been predictable, as waves of gentrification in other cities have always invaded the neighbourhoods that produced cutting-edge communities. But now, even the bar the Hour folk and friends patronized has rejected its past and the staff that made it such a great place to hang and have a beer or several.

Less foreseeable was the way new communications technology and social media would make the basic formula of "alternative" pretty much obsolete. Now any tiny grouping of interest can establish its own media centre and forum for next to free. Waiting for a once-a-week paper, even a daily, that features a forever-decreasing amount of original content is, we know now, a certain recipe for decline and failure.

So was Hour's death inevitable? Not at all. At the end its depleted and overworked staff struggled valiantly against owner-imposed handicaps to maintain a quality paper that never stopped being a great read. Evolution was necessary, sure. But continued investment in the basic product to ensure it mattered to its readers and the wider community is a crucial element of a business like this. And that's where its owners failed, indeed abdicated their responsibility for an important cultural force. It leaves a sour, ironic taste in my mouth that they are naming the bland and apparently employee-free replacement "Hour Community." Because they abandoned the community Hour helped create.

That's why I am so happy that a small publication like the Nation, which, like the Hour, serves a special, specific community and culture, continues to thrive, despite occasional challenges. It proves that print is not dead. So I mourn the passing of an era, but I am proud to have been a part of a project and a group of people that made a difference in our city, our culture and our politics.

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The Cree Environmental Internship Program is **a summer program designed for Cree youth to experience,** first-hand, environmental work opportunities within *Eeyou Istchee.*

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Are you ready for the challenge of a lifetime? Apply to the Cree Environmental Internship Program and help us celebrate five years of breaking trails!

Space is limited!
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Download a copy of the Application Form from our website at **www.niskamoon.org**

For more information:
Marc Dunn or Joshua Loon
514-285-6475

Deadline to apply is Friday, April 15

Deadline Extended to Friday April 29 2011

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

The world is getting crazy

by Xavier Kataquapit

My Kookum or Grandmother, Louise Paulmartin, often told me when I was young that "the world was getting crazy". She reserved that comment mainly for when some news from the southern non-Native world would reach us about a calamity or crisis like a war, a terrible flood or if she might have viewed some violent or horrible news on the television. Of course, as a youngster, I never really realized what she meant. When I became a teenager I merely attributed that comment of hers as a result of old age and being out of touch with the modern world.

It is funny what a few years of experience can mean. Recently, it has occurred to me that my Kookum was right about her assessment of human kind on our planet earth. I am not a pessimistic person normally but because I enjoy viewing many news sources and current documentaries this results in a broad awareness of the happenings in the world. We really are quite crazy as a species. Think about it.

For example: there are at least 30 major wars or conflicts going on in the world today as I write this. Millions of people are being harassed, abused, starved and forced from their homes. Thousands are being wounded and killed. Most of these wars involve greed and often the need to control some rich natural resource, like minerals, oil or gas, has a lot to do with it. So, it seems like money is at the root of most of these problems. That's crazy.

We have reignited the support of nuclear power because we are worried about not having enough energy to provide electrical services that light every nook and cranny in cities and towns throughout the developed world, power appliances that heat our homes, cook our food, freeze our food, cut our lawns and make us lazy. Why can't we just alter our way of using energy a bit and save us from having to turn back to nuclear power. Instead, we have decided to return to this technology which creates very dangerous waste that we do not know how to get rid of or safely store. That's crazy.

How about coal? Can you believe it? Coal-burning generation stations are back in a big way because of our need for cheap energy. The burning of coal creates so much pollution and, of course, that leads to all kinds of problems in creating toxins not to mention the effect on our planet in terms of global warming. That's crazy.

We are using up water like there is no tomorrow. Well, as a matter of fact if we keep treating water as though it was infinite in quantity then there won't be any tomorrow. Fresh water is getting more and more depleted and mostly because we just can't seem to figure out how to conserve our most precious natural resources. There are huge parts of the planet where people do not have access to clean water. Here, in North America, we shower in it all day. That's crazy.

Thousands of people, mostly children die every day due to starvation, malnutrition, thirst and disease. We have figured out how to put a man on the moon but we refuse to put the effort, creativity, money and devotion into providing everyone on this planet with a decent life. Most of us here in North America have two or three gas-guzzling vehicles, we eat to excess, we live in nice homes and we have jobs and generally good lives. Thousands of children are dying to have just a little of what we consume. That's crazy.

My Kookum grew up in a harsh remote environment north of Attawapiskat on the James Bay coast. She never had much but she worked with her family in those early days on the land to survive. Life was not easy for my ancestors but they managed to feed themselves, provide shelter and stay healthy. People like my Kookum knew firsthand that there was a relationship with the land. They realized directly that it was a fundamental truth to respect Mother Earth. It was a matter of survival. I now realize that my Kookum was viewing the world from her traditional life on the land when she commented on how "crazy" things seemed to her in the new world.

She understood the natural connections between the land, the people, animals, birds, fish, plants, trees, the wind, moon, sun, stars and water. It must have worried her to see things so out of balance and disconnected. If I close my eyes and drift back in my memory, I can still see her sitting in her chair in her little house. She is looking at me with a sad expression and shaking her head. "The world is getting crazy," she says.

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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Auberge Kanio-Kashee Lodge

POSITION: **Manager - Auberge Kanio-Kashee Lodge**

TERM: One Year Contract with possible extension
(six month probationary period)
SALARY: According to Qualifications, Experience, and Budget
STARTING DATE: May 1, 2011

The Board of Directors of the Auberge Kanio-Kashee Lodge is presently seeking applications for the position of Manager on a Full-time basis. The Manager must oversee the complete running of the Lodge along with direct control of: staff scheduling, restaurant and hotel inventory, renovations, marketing, and day-to-day operations. He or she will report directly to the Board of Directors.

Responsibilities

The Manager must possess the ability to plan, organize, direct and control, the smooth running of the Lodge to ensure customer satisfaction is provided at all times. The duties of the Manager are, but not limited to, the following:

- Develop and implement policies and procedures for the operations of the Lodge
- Prepare budgets, monitor revenues and expenses, and control inventory
- Participate in the development of pricing and promotional strategies
- Negotiate with suppliers for the provision of material and supplies
- Negotiate with clients for the use of the facilities for conventions, banquets, etc
- Recruit and supervise staff, oversee training and set work schedules
- Monitor staff performance and supervise personnel files
- Resolve customer complaints and ensure health and safety regulations are followed
- Other related issues

Employment Requirements

- Secondary V graduate plus a College Diploma or a University degree in Hotel Management or other related diploma is required. However, a minimum of Secondary V and a combination of training and experience in the above responsibilities may be considered.
- Must possess excellent communication skills both orally and written.
- Must have a good working knowledge of computer skills and software programs such as Maitre'd, Quickbooks, Excel, and Microsoft programs.
- Must possess managerial and supervisory skills as well as exhibit a professional attitude in dealing with internal and external staff and/or customers.
- Must be honest, trustworthy and well-mannered.
- Must be able to work independently with little supervision or as part of the team.
- Must have knowledge of the Cree's of the Waskaganish First Nation.
- The ability to speak Cree and French would be a definite asset.

There will be a screening process and only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

Deadline for submissions is April 22, 2011

Send your resume to the address below and mark as "Confidential"

Mr. Lawrence P. Katapatuk – President Board of Directors
Auberge Kanio-Kashee Lodge
7 JC Watt Street, P.O. Box 360
Waskaganish, QC J0M 1R0
info@kanio-kasheelodge.ca

CLASSIFIEDS

BIRTHDAYS

We would like to wish a happy birthday to a wonderful girl Lizzie-Ann Whiskeychan. She will turn 4 years old on April 30th. We love you so much and miss you a lot. Hope to see you soon. With all our love, forever from "Maman Lyne" + Letty + Angie.

Happy 9th birthday to Ryan Campbell! Jabweh, my baby bwetstu is getting so tall! All of his pants are getting short! Mommy loves you very much and enjoy your birthday. Also, happy birthday to Keenan Nakogee, Leslie Mianscum, Nancy Mianscum-Trapper (hee-hee) and of course, happy birthday to me (Robin Campbell)!! Love you guys and enjoy!!

I would like to wish a happy birthday to Abraham Salt on April 1st, 2011. Happy birthday my love and many more! tweety xxx

Happy 4th birthday to my handsome son Mikey Mark! We love you so much! You brighten our days with your lovely smile. We love you so much my sweetheart. Love always, Mommy (Amy Mark), (sisters) Nahla & Chloe, and Carl xoxox

We would like to wish our little princess Nahla Bosum-Mark a Happy 1st birthday! I thank the Lord for blessing us with such a sweet angel. We love you so much! From: Mikey, Chloe, Mommy (Amy) and Daddy (Carl) xoxox

You're beautiful baby from the outside in.

Chase your dreams but always know the road that'll lead you home again.

Go on, take on this whole world.

But to me you know you'll always be, my little girl.

Every time I hear these lyrics I think of my baby girl, and how old she's becoming. I want her to know how much I love her and care for her, that I would do anything for her. Happy 5th birthday to RILEY-KATHERINE BROWN-MOSES on April 4th, 2011 Love Always Mom, (Soleil Brown) Uncle (Dylan Brown) Aunt (Tina Brown) in EASTMAIN QUEBEC!

Happy 9th birthday to our son Jaedon Christopher Keion Lane Mapachee Salt on April 8th, 2011! We love you so much and you are getting so tall already! From mom, dad, JoAnna and JoAnne Xoxoxoxoxooxoxoxoxoxoxox

Happy belated birthday to David Kakabat (of Wemindji) on March 31st, 2011. From your wife Frances & your children Lorraine, Tara, Paul, Richard, Karen and Stephanie.

PERSONAL MESSAGES

I would like to wish all Cree (and other First Nations) post-secondary students the best of luck in their final examinations. Keep up the good work! Let's give this one last boost of focusization :P!

A few years ago, my father gave me an inspirational thought. He said that when he was in post-secondary education down south, he would pretend that he was camping. His bachelor's apartment was like his tent. Thinking this way, he would lay on his bed with a toothpick in his mouth and just read, read, and read some more, especially during finals. Interesting, I thought, but I asked, "What do you do when you hear geese outside? Do you look for your gun?" lol. I just wanted to share this with all students and those considering higher education :)

Having your mom down south helps a whole lot as well :) Thank you so much mom for being there for me all these years, helping me with Dan and all. You are truly my backbone! But now, my backbone is sore from sitting in front of the computer so long doing 4.5 years of university work!

Well, back to my book! Take care everyone! And if you can, try to bring your mother down for a few months! I'm sure that, statistically, doing so produces better results in school work :)

Enomey x0x0x

Prez of the CSA of MTL

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

I want to wish my Wemindji friends a great goose break, even if it's not now... enjoy it! Miss you! From Josée Dodier

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared. 514-843-4333.

Kid's Help Phone Line: 1-800-668-6868 (www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Youth helpline: 1-800-263-2266 (www.teljeunes.com)

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Parent helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parenthelpline.ca)

Drugs: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogueaidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality resources center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688. (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec: 1-866-277-3553

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: http://www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources.html

Cree Jobs Partnership

Cree jobs Partnership is a not for profit corporation based in Mistissini, Quebec working in collaboration with the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership program which supports Aboriginal industry partnerships created to deliver job-specific training that responds to employer demand for skilled workers.

It is the first program of it's kind under ASEP to join forces with exclusively Aboriginal partners dedicated to achieving the project's main overall objectives which are:

To create 301 new, sustainable, long-term jobs for the Cree in the James Bay region within 3 key sectors of the Cree economy (Construction, Catering and Transport) and will include both trades and management positions.

To provide support to both individual Cree trainees and employers of the trainees to maximize potential of the Cree trainers.

Currently, we have construction projects in Mistissini, Chisasibi, Ouje-Bougamau, Nemaska and Waskaganish.

Cree Jobs Partnership will be presented to the communities of:
Eastmain, Wemindji, Whapmagoostui, and Waswanipi.

For more information please contact the Cree Construction and Development Company office located in Mistissini by phone at: 418-923-3888 or by fax at: 418-923-2050

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